

## **School Climate Surveys District Results for 2010-11**

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October , 2011

## Overview

Each school year, the School Climate Survey is administered to gather information on the perceptions that students, their parents, and school staffs hold concerning their schools and their performance. In 2010-2011, the survey was distributed to approximately 92,000 parents, 48,000 elementary, secondary, and adult students, and 25,000 staff. This report summarizes selected major points from the results of that survey, as they pertain to the Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade program. In addition to districtwide averages, results are broken down by regional center. Information identical to that summarized for the district is reviewed for the regular schools of each region. Alternative, special education, and vocational/adult schools are treated elsewhere in separate item-specific reports.

Results continue to be very similar to those in past years. Although there is variation from region to region, the majority of respondents from the three groups surveyed (parents, students, and staff) were satisfied with their schools in Miami-Dade County. An analysis of selected survey items indicates an overall increase in satisfaction over the past five years. As in previous survey administrations, at the district level parents, students, and staff from all educational levels (elementary, K-8, middle, and senior high) provided overall school grades in the "A" to "B" range.

## About the 2010-11 Surveys

School Climate Surveys of parents, students, and staff have been regularly administered in the Miami-Dade County Public School district since the early 1990s. The purpose of these surveys is to gather information regarding what these groups think about the school and their perceptions concerning how the school can be improved. Results from several of the most recent years are available by school on the Department of Research Services website: <http://drs.dadeschools.net>. In addition to providing information to the public, survey results are intended to assist schools in the identification of priorities for their annual School Improvement Plans.

The 2011 surveys were administered in January and February. Forty-six percent of the parents who were surveyed in 2011 responded, roughly equivalent to last year's 44 percent. Student returns decreased by six percent to 81 percent. The staff response rate dropped from 72 percent to 62 percent. Detailed by-school results were provided to the schools before the beginning of the school year. The primary purpose of these reports was to facilitate an in-depth view of the learning climate at each school. The present report represents a byproduct of those by-school reports and summarizes selected districtwide results.

The patterns of the responses for all groups were very similar to the previous year's patterns, and do not deviate greatly from the response patterns of earlier administrations. All groups were generally positive in their responses, as they have been in previous years, expressing general agreement with the survey items. On average, parents and staff have a high percent of agreement with the items indicating a high degree of satisfaction with their schools. Students at the elementary level also have a high average agreement on the items, but middle and senior high students are less likely to express satisfaction with their school. In the appendices the item-by-item results are listed by educational level (elementary, K-8, middle and senior) for each of the three responding groups—parents, staff, and students—for the district, and separately for the regional centers and the charter schools as a group.

The results for selected items reported below pertain to the Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade program. Results for the K-8 schools have now been calculated as a distinct level for the seventh year. However, the K-8 schools are still relatively few, and the summary results are more volatile than are those for the other levels. Charter school results, presented as a separate "region," are also less reliable, due in part to difficulties in obtaining accurate counts regarding the number of staff working at some schools.

## Results for Selected Items

### **Safety, Quality, and Overall Climate**

Of the items that are comparable across all the groups surveyed (students, parents, and staffs), three are most often the source of queries. One is the item on school safety ("The school is safe and secure;" Table 1). Another is the item concerning quality of education ("Students are getting a good education at this school;" Table 2). The third is the general item about whether the school's overall climate is positive and promotes learning (Table 3).

The breakdown of these three responses by regional center for 2011 is displayed in the following three tables. Several patterns are observable across all the items — districtwide and within their respective regions. Taken by region, some variation is observed, with Regional Center IV usually exhibiting the highest ratings. Charter schools, while diverse in composition, fare quite well on the surveys and outperform district averages at almost all levels. The variation across regions is much larger for the middle and senior levels than for the elementary and K-8, for each of the three respondent groups. The greatest across-region variation is at the middle school level, where ratings can vary by 20 percentage points.

**Table 1**  
**Responses Concerning School Safety in 2011**  
**Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels**

		Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V	Charter	District
<b>Staff</b>								
Elementary		91	91	90	95	92	96	92
K-8		96	91	95	97	90	94	93
Middle		81	79	83	94	82	94	84
Senior High		93	83	93	88	83	98	87
<b>Parents</b>								
Elementary		93	89	90	92	90	95	91
K-8		94	86	92	93	88	94	91
Middle		79	70	81	89	72	92	84
Senior High		87	85	87	89	81	92	85
<b>Students</b>								
Elementary		85	81	85	93	84	89	87
K-8		85	79	89	90	77	80	82
Middle		66	60	66	81	62	77	69
Senior High		81	80	81	87	81	84	79
Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the school is safe and secure. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.								

Taken by educational level, going from elementary down the rows through the senior level, there is a tendency for approval to decrease. Respondents of each group at the elementary and K-8 levels show the highest percent agreement, and the middle school respondents the lowest, with senior high respondents averaging only a few points higher.

**Table 2**  
**Responses Concerning Quality of Education 2011**  
**Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels**

		Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V	Charter	District
<b>Staff</b>								
	Elementary	94	89	92	96	92	94	93
	K-8	96	91	96	96	92	93	93
	Middle	85	84	84	96	86	93	88
	Senior High	90	87	92	88	88	92	87
<b>Parents</b>								
	Elementary	94	92	95	95	93	96	94
	K-8	93	91	94	96	89	93	92
	Middle	83	84	85	91	82	91	87
	Senior High	81	88	84	91	87	89	85
<b>Students</b>								
	Elementary	91	89	90	93	89	90	90
	K-8	89	82	87	84	82	77	83
	Middle	66	70	69	78	68	77	72
	Senior High	69	75	72	83	80	72	72

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the student is receiving a good education. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.

**Table 3**  
**Perceptions of Overall School Climate in 2011**  
**Percent Agreeing at the Regional and District Levels**

		Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V	Charter	District
<b>Staff</b>								
	Elementary	89	83	87	92	86	89	88
	K-8	92	89	93	94	85	85	90
	Middle	74	75	74	91	73	92	78
	Senior High	85	80	86	80	79	93	81
<b>Parents</b>								
	Elementary	94	91	92	96	92	96	94
	K-8	92	92	93	96	86	92	92
	Middle	76	72	80	86	74	88	82
	Senior High	77	79	82	87	81	85	81
<b>Students</b>								
	Elementary	82	74	78	87	76	82	80
	K-8	76	63	74	74	66	65	69
	Middle	48	46	48	61	46	61	53
	Senior High	46	60	58	74	57	62	59

Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree that the overall school climate is positive. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with this aspect of school climate.

At the K-8 level, students in grades comparable to both the elementary (K-5) and the middle (6-8) levels are surveyed, inviting a comparison to the ratings at both those levels. At the K-8 level both staff and parent ratings are much higher across all the items than at the middle school level, and only slightly lower than the elementary level.

Considered by responding group, students tend to rate their school lower than their parents and teachers. In a few instances, the student level of agreement falls below half at the middle and senior levels. Parents tend to show greater satisfaction, frequently averaging higher than staff on overall climate at the elementary and K-8 levels.

Over time, the general trend for all groups is one of increased satisfaction. Table 4 displays the percent agreeing with the same three items as mentioned above in two-year intervals over the past five years. The changes in results over the years for K-8 and middle schools are mixed. However, it is easily seen that there is a general increase in agreement for elementary schools and decided increase in agreement for senior high schools for all reporting groups.

**Table 4**  
**Trends for Three Important Items Tracked Over the Past Five Years**  
**Percent Agreeing at Two-Year Intervals**

Educational Level		Elementary			K-8			Middle			Senior		
		2007	2009	2011	2007	2009	2011	2007	2009	2011	2007	2009	2011
<b>Staff</b>													
	Safe & Secure	91	90	92	96	96	93	88	87	84	83	86	87
	Good Education	92	92	93	97	95	93	87	86	88	82	83	87
	Positive Climate	88	88	88	91	92	90	81	81	78	76	80	81
<b>Parents</b>													
	Safe & Secure	87	89	91	88	90	91	77	80	84	75	79	85
	Good Education	93	93	94	94	93	92	83	86	87	82	83	85
	Positive Climate	92	93	94	93	93	92	77	81	82	74	77	81
<b>Students</b>													
	Safe & Secure	84	86	87	83	84	82	64	68	69	69	73	79
	Good Education	89	89	90	85	81	83	70	73	72	68	71	72
	Positive Climate	76	78	80	70	70	69	50	53	53	55	58	59
		Note: Percentages refer to the degree that respondents agree or strongly agree to the item. Higher percentages reflect more satisfaction with the statement.											
		= improvement from 2007 to 2009				= improvement from 2009 to 2011							

## Grading the School

The last item in each survey asks the respondent to give his or her school a grade analogous to the grade that students receive for their work. This grade may be regarded as a summary of the attitudes that the respondent holds toward the school. The district and regional averages of those school grades, by responding group and by level, are shown in Table 5. At the district level, there is no grade below "B-." At the regional level, the results are also overall quite favorable. Among the regional grades, approximately 82% are in the "B" range, 13% in the "A" range and 5% in the "C" range.

**Table 5**  
**2010 Rating of Overall School Grade, Averaged by Region and District**

		Regional Center						
		I	II	III	IV	V	Charter	District
Staff	Elementary	B+	B	B+	A-	B	A-	B+
	K-8	A-	B+	A-	A-	B	B+	B+
	Middle School	B	B	B	A-	B-	A-	B
	Senior High	B	B	B	B	B	A-	B
Parents	Elementary	A-	B+	B+	A-	B+	A-	A-
	K-8	B+	B+	A-	A-	B+	B+	B+
	Middle School	B	B	B	B+	B	B+	B
	Senior High	B	B+	B	B+	B+	B+	B
Students	Elementary	B+	B+	B+	A-	B+	B+	B+
	K-8	B	B	B+	B+	B	B	B
	Middle School	C+	C+	B-	B	C+	B	B-
	Senior High	B-	B	B	B	B	B	B
		= improvement from 2010 to 2011						

## Selected Items

In most years, the percentages agreeing to the survey items rarely change by more than a few percentage points from previous years for summaries at the district level. However, in recent years four items on the Staff survey changed by more than five percentage points. This year the item concerning job security dropped considerably. The items about insufficient resources and teacher evaluations remained relatively stable over the last couple of years. The final item concerning student crowding showed dramatic decreases in negative opinions at all educational levels. These are all considered serious matters by the staff and are noteworthy both in their relevance to school reform and budget issues.

**Table 6**  
**Volatile Items at the District-Level**

	Elementary % Agree	K-8 % Agree	Middle % Agree	Senior % Agree
<b>Staff</b>				
I have a feeling of job security in my present position.				
2011	63	64	57	57
2010	76	76	70	69
2009	68	68	62	59
I am limited by insufficient resources (e.g., funds, books, equipment, supplies, etc.).				
2011	36	34	42	46
2010	34	33	39	46
2009	35	34	41	52
Annual teacher evaluations are fair and reasonable.				
2011	83	84	76	75
2010	84	85	76	74
2009	88	85	82	81
I am limited by too many students in each class.				
2011	20	23	22	26
2010	29	30	36	41
2009	23	27	32	41

## References

Cronbach, L. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrica*, 16, 527-530.

Romanik, D., & Froman, T. (1992, December). *Results from the 1991-92 administration of the school report card survey*. Miami, FL: Dade County Public Schools, Office of Educational Accountability.

## Appendices

*Methodological Notes*  
***District Summary of Parent, Student, and Staff Responses***

## Methodological Notes

### ***Survey Reliability***

All measurement involves some error. However, there are several methods of estimating how accurate or reliable responses are to a survey. Reliability coefficients for the parent, student, and staff forms of the *School Climate Survey* were estimated from an internal consistency measure referred to as Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach 1951). The value of an alpha depends on the average inter-item correlations (i.e., similarity or consistency in responses from item to item) and the number of items on the survey. The average correlation among items on a survey increases as the consistency of ratings across the various items increase. The closer the value of alpha approaches 1.00, the higher the survey's reliability. The total reliability estimate for the parent form (alpha = 0.96), student form (alpha = 0.88), and for the staff form (alpha = 0.88) support the usefulness of the surveys as reliable instruments.

### ***Caveats***

Several methodological factors must be considered when interpreting these survey results. In general, the larger the sample is, the more accurate the results. The districtwide results reported here are based on sample sizes of several tens of thousands. These sample sizes may be excessive for insuring district-level reliability, but they are the result of aggregating the individual school samples necessary for intended interpretations at that level.

In theory, with district-level samples of these sizes, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus one percentage point of what they would be if the entire population had been surveyed with complete accuracy. In the school-level applications of the data derived from the *School Climate Surveys*, as the sample size decreases, the margin of error increases.

Other possible sources of error include wording and question order, inadequate weighting of the data, and (perhaps most important for this survey process) the refusal of sample members to respond to survey items or the survey as a whole. While it is difficult or impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these influences, there are some mitigating factors.

The response rates for this survey process are among those generally considered by the field to be more than minimally adequate for providing meaningful data. Follow-up telephone survey studies conducted in previous years by Research Services regarding similar procedures suggest that districtwide survey results are exceedingly reliable (Romanik & Froman 1992). Also, consistent patterns of response across similar items can substantially contribute to the readers' confidence in the reported opinion percentages. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that whatever factors contribute to response bias, they are consistent from one year to the next. Thus, yearly changes in reported opinions (except in cases of extremely aberrant response levels) are advanced as representing real changes worthy of serious consideration.

Additionally, the opinions offered in the survey represent anonymous and self-reported perceptions by parents, students, and staff and may not precisely describe the actual situation in the district. However, these opinions represent a reality to the respondents and should afford insight into the impression the district is making on the local community.